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FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9141  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
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RUEHAK/USDAO ANKARA TU PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 005735

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/02/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [PTER](#) [TU](#)  
SUBJECT: TURKISH MILITARY LAYS DOWN A MARKER AGAINST  
ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM

REF: A. ANKARA 05610

[1](#)B. ANKARA 04528  
[1](#)C. ANKARA 05723  
[1](#)D. ANKARA 05582

Classified By: CHARGE NANCY MCEDOWNEY FOR REASONS 1.4 (b,d).

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Summary  
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[1](#)1. (C) Senior Turkish military leaders have made clear, in a recent series of public speeches, that the military is concerned about the twin threats of Islamic fundamentalism and separatism which threaten the secular and unitary nature of the Turkish republic founded by Ataturk. In an October 2 address to officers and cadets of Turkey's combined military academies in Istanbul, newly-appointed chief of the Turkish General Staff (TGS) Yasar Buyukanit said Ataturk's principles were under "serious attack." In strident tones, he warned against those who want to "redefine secularism," as well as those, including some senior government officials, who seek to tarnish the image of the Turkish military. He pointedly stated the military's intention to resist growing Islamic fundamentalism inside Turkey. He condemned specific articles and publications critical of the Turkish Armed Forces, which had "stretched the military's patience" by showing disrespect for the country's secular institutions in the run up to the EU's next progress report on Turkey's EU candidacy. He vowed that the Turkish military would defeat the PKK terrorist threat, while criticizing certain NATO members who, he said, had not done enough to arrest and extradite PKK supporters in their countries. Buyukanit's speech coincided with Prime Minister Erdogan's meeting with the President in Washington and followed a speech by President Sezer at the opening of the fall Parliamentary session that warned against a shift in the political balance towards Islamic conservatives who form the core constituency of Erdogan's AKP party. Meanwhile, Erdogan and other AKP leaders insist there is no Islamic threat and stress the primacy of Turkey's civilian leadership. As Turkey faces election of a new President by the Parliament in May followed by parliamentary elections in November 2007, the secular establishment led by the military has made clear its concern at the direction Erdogan is taking the country. End Summary

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Civil-Military Tensions Rising

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12. (C) Buyukanit's widely anticipated speech comes at a time of increasing tension in civil-military relations in Turkey. Erdogan met privately with Buyukanit before leaving for Washington and reportedly asked Buyukanit not to say anything in his speech that would damage Turkey's EU chances or destabilize the Turkish economy, after Buyukanit's service chiefs had spoken out forcefully about the threat of fundamentalism within Turkey as well as PKK separatism. Setting the stage for Buyukanit, the chiefs of the land, naval and air forces had affirmed, in earlier speeches to their respective academies, the military's full commitment to the unified and secular state that Ataturk created from the ruins of the Ottoman empire. The service chiefs made clear that the armed forces remain the guarantors of this legacy. All focused on the growing threat from domestic "reactionaries," a thinly-veiled reference to the Islamist conservatives who form the core of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP). Their remarks stressed that, despite accepting reforms seeking to reduce the military's political profile as part of Turkey's EU accession process, the military has no intention of remaining indifferent if it perceives a threat to the fundamental secular nature of the state. All of them, including Buyukanit, stopped short of suggesting military intervention, but made clear they remained players in the political process.

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A Growing Sense of Insecurity  
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13. (C) The statements made by senior military leaders, which were obviously carefully coordinated and pointed, seek to

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address not only the military's own insecurity in the face of perceived attacks sponsored by the AKP government, but growing popular insecurity as well. Against the background of a perceived Christian-Muslim divide many see Turkey's EU bid faltering; increasing numbers of Turks are convinced the EU has no intention of letting Turkey in, at least without extracting unbearable concessions on Cyprus and the Armenian issue. The European Commission representative in Ankara, Hans-Jorg Kretschmer, publicly criticized the pronouncements of the service chiefs as reflecting undue military involvement in politics, a charge roundly rejected by the military and secular elites. Senior military officials have praised President Sezer's October 1 speech to the Turkish Parliament (ref c), which warned against a shift in the balance of political power towards Islamists -- a clear reference to the secular elite's fear that the AKP will seek to put PM Erdogan or a like-minded religious conservative in the Presidency when Sezer's term ends in May 2007.

14. (C) At the same time, a map of the Middle East published in a recent Armed Forces Journal article showing Turkey truncated by the creation of "Free Kurdistan" has been widely and repeatedly reproduced in the Turkish press and described as the U.S. plan for dismembering Turkey and creating a "new Middle East" (ref d). The reported use of this map by an American officer during a September 15 lecture at the NATO Defense College (NDC) in Rome has elicited protests from the Foreign Ministry as well as the General Staff and has given the map story new life in the press. Asked if younger military officers share popular concerns that the map -- and frequent speculation among U.S. think tanks and pundits about the merits of dividing Iraq -- reflect official U.S. policy, a well-place two-star general told us "it's not just the young officers who are concerned."

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AKP Tilt toward Muslim World  
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15. (C) The military's concerns with the Erdogan government

are not solely tied to the AKP's domestic religious agenda but also include Erdogan's foreign policy, seen as promoting Turkey's ties with the Islamic world at the expense of its relations with NATO and the EU. The TGS remains wary of Erdogan's efforts to expand Turkey's political and economic relations with Iran and Syria while seeking a higher profile in the OIC and courting the Arab League and Non-Aligned Movement. Erdogan's defense of UN-listed terror financier al-Qadi has further heightened the suspicions of the secular establishment.

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Comment  
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16. (C) Seeing itself as the only institution that can counter the threat to Turkey's secular order from domestic extremism, the Turkish military is closing ranks around the blunt-speaking Buyukanit. The military establishment has effectively become the political opposition to the AKP, bolstering the loud but largely ineffectual secular parties, and can be expected to make its views known with increasing frequency as Turkey approaches presidential and parliamentary elections in 2007. End Comment

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